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Tomemakers' chat

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U. S. DEPARTMENT
OF AGRICULTURE

MONDAY, APRIL 12, 1943

SUBJECT: "VICTORY GARDEN TOMATOES." Information from plant scientists of the U. S. Department of Agriculture.

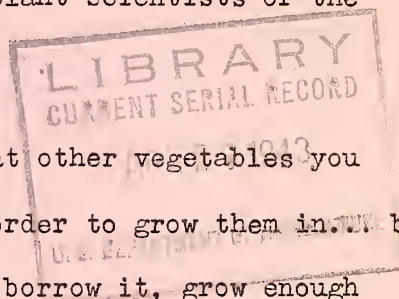
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No matter how small your garden is...no matter what other vegetables you have to slight...no matter if you have only a flower border to grow them in...be sure to have tomatoes. If you have the land -- or can borrow it, grow enough tomatoes to have fresh all summer and plenty to can for next winter. Tomatoes are a "must" for the Victory Garden. They meet the wartime food emergency in many different ways.

Tomatoes are one of the easiest of all vegetables to grow. And they are the easiest and safest to can. What's more, tomatoes rank up at the top of the list for vitamin C. Ripe or green, fresh or canned, tomatoes are rich in C. In wartime everybody needs to check carefully to be sure of getting enough vitamin C every single day. Vitamin C is one of the vitamins the body can't store. You have to have it regularly for good health, and you have to have enough. Call on tomatoes for a generous share of your vitamin C needs.

It's this way about vitamin C. When you can have plenty of fresh fruits and vegetables every day...or when you can have plenty of canned tomatoes or citrus fruit every day...you don't need to worry about getting the vitamin C you need. But in wartime with the shortage and rationing of canned fruits and vegetables...with shortage of shipping and labor that cuts down on fresh supplies and may push up the price...in wartime vitamin C becomes a problem both for now and for next winter. But you have one sure way of getting a supply of vitamin C for your family's health. That way is to grow and can your own tomatoes.

Plan, plant and can wisely this year. Tomatoes are easy to can because they



require no pressure cooker. Can them in the water-bath, as you do fruits. Can plenty to supply you with tomatoes all during the months after the garden has gone. For full value in vitamin C can tomatoes straight rather than in catsup or chili sauce.

Now you are asking: "But how much is plenty of tomatoes for eating fresh and canning?" The answer is: Anywhere from a dozen to 15 plants for each member of your family. Have some early-variety tomatoes and some intermediate or late variety. That will give you tomatoes all season long. Seeds of early varieties, you start indoors. Seeds of late varieties you plant outdoors in the garden when the weather is warm.

By this time, you should have started seed indoors if you are going to raise your own early tomato plants. If you haven't started seed yet, better buy plants for your early tomatoes. Many florists are raising tomato plants instead of flowers this year. Southern-grown plants are coming north in quantity, too.

Be sure all danger of frost is past before you set plants out in the garden. Tomatoes like it warm rather than wintry. But set them out in the cool of the evening or on a cloudy day so they can establish themselves before they have to take the sun. Set them out promptly, too, so the roots won't have a chance to dry out. Set the plants fairly deep, 3 or 4 inches in the ground. The best are stocky bushy plants, 6 to 10 inches high. If your plants are long and spindling, bury part of the stem along with the roots. That will make stronger plants because new rootlets will come out along the buried stem. Planting deep saves roots from drying out in dry weather.

Cutworms dearly love to feast on young tomato plants. In one night a few cutworms can cause a lot of damage. Guard against them by putting a paper collar around each tomato plant as you set it in the garden. The paper collar should go down into the soil and also stand 2 or 3 inches above ground. The best way to

kill cutworms is with poison bait, but in a small home garden paper collars are easier.

Tomatoes will thrive in almost any fertile soil that is well cultivated and watered enough. But tomatoes do best in ground prepared with plenty of rotted manure, with superphosphate added... or with a balanced garden fertilizer, high in phosphorus. The Victory Garden fertilizer selling especially for home vegetable gardens this year is right for tomatoes.

The tomato is a particularly thirsty plant...needs plenty of water in the soil...extra in dry weather. Sprinkling tomatoes is not the best way of supplying water to tomatoes. Sprinkling wets the leaves and fruit...is likely to encourage disease and crack the tomatoes. A better way to water is to run water into a furrow beside the plants, or run it directly into the soil from a pipe or hose. One of the troubles in growing tomatoes is blossom-end rot. This is due mostly to an uneven supply of water. You can help avoid blossom end rot by keeping the soil evenly and moderately moist.

Save space in your garden by staking tomato plants and pruning them to a single stem. That way you can set plants as close as 2 feet in each direction. Have stakes 5 or 6 feet high to begin with. It may look too ambitious to set a 6-foot stake beside a 6-inch plant, but you will be surprised how soon the plant will need that tall stake. Tie the plant loosely with cloth strips or other strips that won't cut the stem.

Write the U. S. Department of Agriculture, Washington, D. C. for either of 2 free bulletins that will give you more details on growing tomatoes and other Victory Garden vegetables. Write for the "Farm Garden" or the "City Home Garden."

